

Arthur L. Bloomfield

1888-1962

Dr. Arthur L. Bloomfield was a dominant figure in the history of medicine in California. For most of the 28 years he was Professor of Medicine and Executive of the Department of Medicine at the Stanford Medical School, he was the leading intellectual figure in internal medicine in the West. A superb and beloved teacher, an extraordinarily wise physician and consultant, he had an amazing sense and feel of the needs of students, of residents, of patients, of physicians and of people. He contributed greatly to the advancement of medicine, particularly knowledge of infectious diseases, and was a pioneer in the clinical use of penicillin and other antibiotics. California medicine is much richer for the life and contributions of this remarkable teacher, able scholar, investigator and physician.

DWIGHT L. WILBUR

DR. ARTHUR L. BLOOMFIELD, outstanding Professor of Medicine, Emeritus, of Stanford University School of Medicine, died in his home, of coronary thrombosis, at the age of 74 on July 5, 1962.

An only son of the Professor of Comparative Philology at Johns Hopkins University, Dr. Bloomfield was born in Baltimore on May 30, 1888. His early education at Boys' Latin School was an indication of what was to become his total immersion in the academic life. He received the A.B. degree from Johns Hopkins in 1907, the M.D. from its medical school in 1911 just a few years after William Osler departed and during Abraham Flexner's critical study of medical education. Eleven years of a superior learning experience elapsed at Johns Hopkins Hospital before Dr. Bloomfield emerged as Associate Professor of Medicine, and from that post he came to Stanford as Professor of Medicine and Executive of the Department of Medicine in 1926 upon the death of Professor A. W. Hewlett. After his retirement in 1954, he served as Consultant in Medicine at Fort Miley, the San Francisco Veterans Administration Hospital.

His contributions to medical science were manifold. An early interest in influenza, from the 1918 epidemic, directed him toward long-continued studies in infectious diseases. In this field he became a consultant to the Secretary of War, was selected by the government as a pioneer expert in this country on penicillin, and was one of the first to use this agent in the cure of patients with bacterial endo-

carditis, a previously fatal disease. He also studied influenza and the common cold.

Another chief, continuing interest had to do with peptic ulcer of the stomach and duodenum; he wrote repeatedly on the cause of pain in this disorder, and with Dr. W. S. Pollard published a monograph on gastric secretion.

Important as were his scientific investigations, he will be remembered by many primarily for his extraordinary abilities as a physician and as a teacher of medicine. One of the earliest and greatest diagnosticians in the West, he had an almost uncanny way of coming to the heart of a patient's problems even in the most complex situations, while ignoring unimportant aspects which he recognized as "peripheral." The patient's welfare and comfort were of great concern to him; his goal was not merely to make a diagnosis but to use his knowledge in a practical way in order to help the patient, in relieving symptoms and prolonging useful and happy life in the best traditions of medicine. In the most sincere recognition of his clinical success, innumerable physicians selected Dr. Bloomfield as consultant for themselves or for members of their families.

His best teaching, and it was superb, came at the bedside, where it was a memorable privilege and real pleasure to observe Dr. Bloomfield intent at his daily work. Small groups of students, interns and resident physicians accompanied him on punctual and regular rounds in the medical wards. Weekly he demonstrated a few selected patients before a group of his colleagues and practicing physicians. Drawn by his profound knowledge of medicine and by his free use of quotations to the point from anyone from O. Henry to Shakespeare, this group became one of the largest of such exercises in San Francisco or the Pacific Coast. In more formal classroom exercises, few, if any, could equal Dr. Bloomfield's ability to prepare his material with deep logic and present it with interest and authority. He enjoyed open and friendly discussions with his colleagues, and often agreed to disagree with them for the sake of listening students.

A perpetual scholar himself, he took care to provide his students with glimpses of relevant historical background as he discussed current clinical problems. Fortunately, some of this aspect of his work remains in the form of *A Bibliography of Internal Medicine*, in two volumes prepared largely after Dr. Bloomfield's retirement from active teaching. "Here," Professor William Bean wrote in the glowing tribute of his book review, "is an example of the scholarship, interest, and kind of charm and excitement which can be found in medical history when illuminated by the hand of a scholar, especi-

ally when that hand is guided and restrained by the mature expertness of an outstanding clinician."

Dr. Bloomfield's interest in medical bibliography was but a part of his love for books in general. He had a fine library of first and rare editions, and was a member of the California Book Club, of the Organization of Bibliophiles and of the Roxburghe Club; he was "Master of the Press" of the latter in 1961. He was director of the splendid historical collection of Stanford's Lane Medical Library, and through his efforts gifts of more than \$50,000 came to the Library for the preservation and binding of rare and valuable books and periodicals.

Although few had less interest than he did in medical politics, Dr. Bloomfield's stature was such that he became president of the American Society for Clinical Investigation, the California Academy of Medicine, and the Pacific Interurban Club. He was chosen as physician-in-chief pro tem at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital of Boston in 1951, was selected in 1952 as one of the few to deliver Georgetown University's Kober Lecture, and received the honorary degree of Doctor of Science from the University of Southern California in 1953. He was a Master of the American College of Physicians, and also was a member of the Association of Amer-

ican Physicians, the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine, the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, the American Society for Experimental Pathology, and for a time was chairman of the Section of Medicine of the American Medical Association. He was a member of Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi, and Alpha Omega Alpha honorary societies, and was on the editorial boards of the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, the *American Journal of Medicine*, and the *Journal of Chronic Diseases*.

He was honored at Stanford by an annual birthday party given by the medical interns and residents for "The Professor," by an "Arthur L. Bloomfield Day" sponsored by the medical alumni upon his retirement, by a *festschrift* number of their Stanford Medical Bulletin dedicated to him a few months later, and by the establishment of the Arthur L. Bloomfield Professorship of Medicine.

Dr. Bloomfield is survived by his wife, Julia Mayer Bloomfield, and three children: Julia Bloomfield, Anne Bloomfield Saltonstall, and Arthur John Bloomfield. Six grandchildren also survive.

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